



University of Mumbai



Indo-Canadian Studies Centre

The Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, University of Mumbai

A Report on the Launch of Dr. Preeti Shirodkar's Book

The Indo-Canadian Studies Centre had organised the launch of Dr. Preeti Shirodkar's book - *Reconciling Reminiscences: Tracing M. G. Vassanji's Journey from 'Routes' to 'Roots'* - on 25th September, 2017. The book was launched by the Canadian Consul General of Mumbai – Mr. Jordan Reeves, followed by a talk titled – “Vassanji's Women: From Bagamayo to Toronto” – given by Professor Mala Pandurang, Vice Principal and Head of English Department, Dr. BMN College. Mr. Leonard Reil, Consul, Political, Economic and Public Affairs at the Consulate General of Canada, Mumbai was a special guest at this book launch.



Dr. Nilufer E. Bharucha, Honorary Coordinator of ICSC, began the event by welcoming the audience and giving them a brief introduction to the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, the work that the centre does and its achievements. Thereafter, the book was formally launched by Mr.

Reeves, followed by a short speech. Mr. Reeves said that M. G. Vassanji's fiction knows no boundaries, both spatial and temporal. Canada being a country of immigrants, the issues and themes addressed in Vassanji's texts have always been relevant. Canada adopted multiculturalism in 1982. Due to multiculturalism, the 'in-between worlds' of the immigrants, who grapple with human rights, freedom of expression, discrimination, etc., has burgeoned. Mr. Reeves called Vassanji the spiritual guru of the people who inhabit these interstitial 'in-between worlds'.



Professor Mala Pandurang's talk focused on the women characters in Vassanji's works. She spoke about the tropes of journey portrayed through the women, who try to cross different boundaries and how they are responsible for the cultural hybridity of the community. The women characters in Vassanji's works occupy an interstitial space which leads to certain transformational processes. What is important is how these women adapt to these changes. Does there exist any fluidity between these worlds? According to Professor Pandurang, the women characters are only made to reach the boundary but do not traverse it, as they are encompassed within a patriarchal framework. Though Vassanji's women characters show great strength in adversity, they are restricted to domesticity. He creates an alternative women centered world

through these minor characters, thereby tracing a larger feminist historiography through the women characters in his works.

After this talk, Dr. Preeti Shirodkar spoke about her book and shared what motivated her to write it. She said that despite the fact that Vassanji has written extensively, he is not read very widely. His writing captures the essence of place and displacement, reflecting upon the issues of home, identity and ways of belonging, among other and is concerned with painful 'routes' undertaken in order to establish 'roots'. This is what had captivated Dr. Shirodkar and made her undertake this project.

The book launch was well attended by the students and faculty of Mumbai University and other guests.
